



**Date of Council Meeting: October 21, 2013**

**TOWN OF LEESBURG  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

**TO:** John Wells, Town Manager

**Subject:** Leesburg Police Briefing on Human Trafficking

**Staff Contact:** Joseph R. Price, Chief of Police

**Recommendation:** This memorandum is for information only.

**Background:** Members of the town council received an invitation from the Church of the Holy Spirit in Leesburg to attend a presentation on November 4, 2013 titled Sex Trafficking Informational Night. Councilmember Hammler asked for an update on the Leesburg situation prior to the November 4, 2013 presentation.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defines human trafficking as the modern day form of slavery involving the illegal trade of people for exploitation and/or commercial gain. Specifically it is the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, obtaining a person for labor, services or commercial sex acts. The act of human trafficking is done by force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of exploitation, involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery. It also includes any commercial sex act involving a minor. Department of Health and Human Services statistics indicate approximately 46% are held for prostitution and 27% are held for Domestic Servitude. In addition the **Polaris Project** has identified that most victims in Virginia are from Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, China and the Dominican Republic. Human trafficking is different than human smuggling; smuggling is transportation based and consensual, trafficking is exploitation based and non-consensual.

While the numbers of reported/investigated cases by the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of VA is small, the severity and brutal nature of these crimes is tremendous. Since FY2011 the US Attorney's Office has investigated 22 cases (18 in the Alexandria Division; the remaining 4 in the Richmond and/or Newport News Divisions). Within Leesburg we have had no reported cases of human trafficking. We have had prostitution investigations, some of which involved massage parlors but no evidence of human trafficking was uncovered.

That being said, it is certainly possible that we may have cases of human trafficking (both sex acts and labor scenarios) that are unreported. Victims of human trafficking are almost always among society's most vulnerable. Victims are often those who; lack social safety nets, suffer from poverty or economic hardship, reside in an area where there is a high demand for cheap labor, are victims of criminal activity and because of immigration

status. The proliferation of social media sites has created fertile grounds for those seeking to victimize vulnerable people, especially children. As with any type of criminal activity, an involved community is our best defense. Community members who suspect trafficking should report it to the Leesburg police department. Indicators of human trafficking can include:

- Does the person appear disconnected from family, friends, community organizations, or houses of worship?
- Has a child stopped attending school?
- Has the person had a sudden or dramatic change in behavior?
- Is a juvenile engaged in commercial sex acts?
- Is the person disoriented or confused, or showing signs of mental or physical abuse?
- Does the person have bruises in various stages of healing?
- Is the person fearful, timid, or submissive?
- Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care?
- Is the person often in the company of someone to whom he or she defers? Or someone who seems to be in control of the situation, e.g., where they go or who they talk to?
- Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?
- Is the person living in unsuitable conditions?
- Does the person lack personal possessions and appear not to have a stable living situation?
- Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures?

In the Northern Virginia region there are several investigative resources that would provide assistance in human trafficking investigations. If there is gang involvement, then the Northern Va Gang Task Force would provide assistance; for other types of non-gang related trafficking, the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of VA sponsors a task force specifically organized for human trafficking investigations. While we have an investigator assigned to the gang task force, we do not have the resources to assign someone to the trafficking task force; that would require additional resources. We also do not have the resources to review various social media/ internet commerce sites such as Craig's List to identify suspected human trafficking commercial sites such as massage parlors. Regarding massage parlors, the town code does not require an adequate screening process to identify questionable operations nor does it allow for the random inspections of massage parlors and other similar operations by law enforcement to insure legal operations.